arglebargle!

monday, november 27, 2006

Compleat Bob Clampett

I recently wrote an article for a fanzine about "The 1970s and the Dark Days of Animation Fandom". And it's true --animation as an art form went underground in the during the '70s both literally and figuratively. If you could find ANY info about classic cartoons you were batting 500...and odds were you would find it in a fan-produced magazine. Arguably the best of what was around was David Mruz's pocket-sized digest mag *Mindrot*. It regularly boasted such contributors as Jerry Beck, Jim Korkis, Mark Kausler and Paul Etcheverry among others.
Issue twelve (from Nov. 1 1978) was a full issue dedicated to Bob Clampett, containing rare interviews with Bob himself and analysis of some of his best-loved classic cartoons. *Also* in that issue was a complete listing of all Bob's cartoon work from 1937 - 1962. (Just no decades' worth of the *Time for Beany* Puppet Show episodes, unfortunately) So without further ado, here's the full Bob Clampett cartoon listings, as they originally appeared in *Mindrot*--compiled by Mark Kausler and Paul Etcheverry, with some extra and color artwork thrown in by me. Revel!

THE FILMS OF BOB CLAMPETT

Compiled by Paul Etcheverry and Mark Kausler.

This list covers Clampett's work as director at the Warner Brothers cartoon studio. The best of his one-reel shorts set the modern records for GPM (Gags Per Minute). He handled the black and white Looney Tunes series almost exclusively from 1938 through 1941. In 1940 he directed his first Technicolor effort, "Goofy Groceries" (3/29/41). From this point on his work began to depart from the more familiar Warner Brothers characters or cast them in new and different contexts (Daffy in BOOK REVIEW, Bugs Bunny in THE OLD GREY HARE and THE BIG SNOOZE). He left the studio after 16 years and launched his "Beany and Cecil" series.

Dates listed below are release dates compiled from the Motion Picture Herald. I have given what credits I've compiled, even though they give little evidence of how many artists contributed to the gags and animation.

about me

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previous posts

the new adventures of huckleberry finn-intro(full ...
Holy old-age Batman!
KFC -- WTF???
Say it ain't MOE!
Back on the Richter Scale
Bits o' Weirdness #1
Battle of the Brothers!

provided the voices for the cartoons. Musical scores were by the talented Carl W. Stalling, and sound was by Treg Brown.

Mouseman comes out of his hole in Clampett's incredible cartoon THE GREAT PIGGY BANK ROBBERY.

A KEY TO THE WARNER BROTHERS CREDITS RIDDLE

by Bob Clampett

It is very difficult to tell who really did what on the cartoons by reading the credit titles. Units of five or more animators were responsible for the thousands of drawings in each short, yet many of the titles only credited one animator. And in some cases he might have had only one or two scenes in that particular picture. The Studio rotated the names, so if you mentally note the names of the four animators who were given animation credit on that same Director's previous four cartoons you might in some cases come close to being right.

But, of course, the animators as well as the gag men moved from time to time between units, so this can confuse the issue further.

The single "story" credit can also be misleading. For example, such directors as Avery and Clampett usually were the ones most responsible for their own stories and yet they have never been given "story" credit.

The single person credited for story might be but one of two or more gag men that had collaborated with the Director on his story.

Bob Clampett wrote his first five Porky's by himself ("Get Rich Quick Porky" to "What Price Porky"), and then from late 1937 to 1946 his key collaborators were (by order of appearance) Ernie Gee, Melvin "Tubby" Millar, Warren Foster and Michael Maltese. And to a lesser degree Dave Monahan, Mike Maltese, Todd Pierce, Frank Tashlin and Lou Lilly.

Warner Brothers Cartoons
Directed by Bob Clampett

Clampett's "Beaky Buzzard"

2009 is Bustin' Loose All Over!

R. I. P. Bettie Page

Black & White in COLOR #5 : The CREATURE!

archives

April 2006
May 2006
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I Power Blogger

cartoon; he is credited as "Robert Clampett". (Color)

PORKY'S POOCH (12/27/41) This cartoon introduces the character of "Charlie Dog," the pet who will do absolutely anything to get a master. In the Chuck Jones cartoons THE ARFUL ORPHAN, LITTLE ORPHAN AIREDALE, OFTEN AN ORPHAN, etc., the story concept and some of the gags are identical.

CRAZY CRUISE (3/14/42) Co-director - Ted Avery (Color)

HORTON HATCHES THE EGG (4/11/42) A - Robert McKimson (Color)

THE WACKY WABBIT (5/2/42) A - Sutherland, A "Merrie Melodie" in Technicolor. Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd hunt for gold.

NUTTY NEWS (5/23/42) A - Virgil Ross

THE WACKY BLACKOUT (7/11/42) A - Sutherland

BUGS BUNNY GETS THE BOID (7/11/42) A - Rod Scribner; Technicolor; This film introduced the bashful, dumb buzzard, Beaky.

SAPIN' ON THE CUFF (8/22/42) A - Ross; Clampett's last black and white "Looney Tune."

THE HEP CAT (10/3/42) A - McKimson; Both Warner Brothers and Clampett's first color "Looney Tune."

A TALE OF TWO KITTIES (11/21/42) The first "Tweety" cartoon. Tweety says "I tot I taw a putty-tat" for the first but not the last time. This film starred the two cats who played Abbott and Costello better than Abbott and Costello could.

COAL BLACK AND DE SEBBEN DWARFS (1/16/43) A - Scribner; Featuring incredibly exaggerated parodies of black stereotypes and of the Snow White story, this stands as the first of a short series of very elaborate musical cartoons Bob Clampett made. With the other three in the series -- TIN PAN ALLEY CATS, CHANT CONCERTO, and RUSSIAN RHAPSODY -- this film boasts unusually high production values for a Warners cartoon, and particularly exceptional artwork.

TORTOISE WINS BY A HARE (2/20/43) A - McKimson (Bugs Bunny)

WISE QUACKING DUCK (5/1/43) A - Phil Monroe; with Mr. Hook and Daffy's famous strip-tease.

TIN PAN ALLEY CATS (6/26/43) A - Scribner; This could well be the greatest departure any Warner Bros. cartoon director ever took from the established character series. It is perhaps the wildest of Clampett's "dream" cartoons, coming about as close as the Warner's studio ever did to what is termed "abstract" animation. Due to racial stereotypes (the main character, a cat, resembles the great stride pianist Fats Waller), though not condescending ones, this film is rarely shown nowadays, even in "Merrie Melodies" retrospectives.

CHANT CONCERTO (9/25/43) A - McKimson; This may be Clampett's best known cartoon, a "Fantasia" parody featuring an absolutely hysterical sequence to "Tales of the Vienna Woods." With Porky, Bugs, Elmer and Baby Daffy.

Still from Bob Clampett's "A Corny Concerto."

© 2006 by Warner Bros. Inc.
Courtesy of the Bob Clampett Collection

FALLING HARE (10/30/43) A - Scribner; This stars a little "Gremlin"; this time it's Bugs Bunny's turn to be the victim.

AN ITCH IN TIME (12/4/43) Elmer Fudd, his dog and a flea.

WHAT'S COOKIN' DOC? (1/8/44) A - McKimson; Bugs Bunny disrupts the Academy Awards banquet in this imaginative effort.

TICK TOCK TUCKERED (4/8/44) A - Thomas McKimson; This is a remake of Clampett's first film as director, PORKY'S BADTIME STORY, with Daffy Duck.

RUSSIAN RHAPSODY (5/20/44) A - Scribner; Little Gremlin's fight Hitler in his plane on the way to bomb Moscow. Last of Clampett's crazy musicals.

HARE RIDIN' (6/24/44) A - McKimson (Bugs Bunny)

SLIGHTLY DAFFY (7/17/44) Color remake of SCALP TROUBLE.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (8/19/44) A - T. McKimson (Tweety)

BUCKAROO BUGS (8/26/44) A - McKimson; A western with Bugs pitted against a little red-headed cowboy.

THE OLD GREY HARE (10/28/44) A - McKimson; Bugs and Elmer as babies and oldsters.

DRAFTEE DAFFY (2/17/45) A - Manny Gould; Daffy runs from the little man from the Draft Board.

GRUESOME TWOSOME (4/9/45) A - McKimson, Basil Davidovich, Scribner, Ellis.

WACKY WHEELS (7/28/45) A - Scribner, Gould, Ellis, J.C. Melendez; Remake of INJUN TROUBLE.

BASHFUL BUZZARD (4/15/45) (Beaky Buzzard)

BOOK REVUE (1/5/46) A - Scribner, Gould, McKimson, Melendez; In this cartoon, the Herman-Ising "Magazine Rack" genre is turned inside out, upside down, and sideways. With Daffy Duck.

BABY BUTTLESNECK (3/16/46) A - Scribner, Gould, McKimson, Melendez; Porky & Daffy.

KITTY KORNERED (6/8/46) A - Melendez, Scribner, McKimson, Gould.

THE GREAT PIGGY BANK ROBBERY (7/20/46) A - Scribner, Gould, Melendez, Ellis.

RECALL TO ARMS (8/3/46) Wolf gets turned on watching a Bogart & Bacall movie.

THE BIG SNOOZE (10/5/46) Elmer tears up his Warner Bros. contract; Bugs must invade Elmer's dream world to win him back.

Miscellany ...

GOOFY GOPHERS (1/25/47) Started by Clampett; finished by Art Davis.

THRETTE PIE (1947) Started by Clampett; finished by F. Freleng.

DOUGH FOR THE DO-DO (1949) The studio retained Clampett's PORKY IN WACKYLAND in color, inserted a gag from his TIN PAN ALLEY CATS, omitted his voice track of the Wackyland crowd, and changed the end gag.

IT'S A GRAND OLD NAG (1947) Republic's only cartoon release! Charlie Horse and Kay-dy La Mare.

FIGHTING TOOLS (1943) Five minute "Private Snafu" cartoon (b/w) for the Army-Navy Screen Magazine.

BOOBY TRAPS (1944) Another "Private Snafu" cartoon (b/w).

ANY BONDS TODAY(1942) Three minute patriotic trailer with Bugs, Elmer & Porky.

WHEN'S YOUR BIRTHDAY (1937) Clampett directed a cartoon sequence in this Joe E. Brown comedy feature.

No. 1: 1. SPOTS GET A LEOPARD -- Beany and Cecil go big game hunting for an illusive prey -- Old Spot the Leopard.
2. INVASION OF EARTH BY ROBOTS -- A family of Robots from Venus rocket to earth for a picnic complete with robot ants.
3. CECIL MEETS THE STINGING DINOSAUR -- The gang sails to No Ethyl Atoll to capture a stinging Dinosaur.

No. 2: 1. LITTLE ACE FROM OUTER SPACE -- A space mouse whose nose cone plunges into the sea is rescued by Cecil the Sea Sick Sea Serpent.
2. SUPER-CECIL -- In this satire on Super-Heroes Cecil in his Super suit outwits Dishonest John as the Billious Beetle.
3. THE WILDMAN OF WILDSVILLE -- An unpredictable artist named Go Man Van Gogh splashes the entire jungle with color and finally paints himself into a corner.

No. 3: 1. DAVEY CRICKETT -- A plot-sized Davey Crockett upsets Dishonest John's plans.
2. STRANGE OBJECTS -- Bonzo' Tom is introduced in his Rickety Rocket Ship and leads B.J. on a merry chase.
3. THE CAPTURE OF TEAR-A-LONG THE BOTTED LION -- The gang journeys to Pitmate Hill Hill in search of a fabled feline health nut.

No. 4: 1. A TRIP TO THE SCHNOOK -- The gang journeys to the Moon's Dune the Schnook, where they encounter the Schnook Goon.
2. CRIME DOESN'T PAY -- The long arm of the law finally catches up with Dishonest John in this prison break satire.
3. BEANY'S BUFFALO HUNT -- In this way out Western Buffalo Bull gives 01' Dejon Fighter Pop Gunn and the gang a run for their money.

No. 5: 1. THE MONSTROUS MONSTER -- Swordfish Jack the Knife and Cecil's other underwater friends rescue him from a Shish-kebob eating sea monster.
2. TIMMY HAHN -- The gang venture into Indian territory where they meet mischievous Timmy Hawk.
3. TO HO AND A BOBBLE OF GUM -- Captain Buffenpuff and his crew embark on a pirate adventure featuring the world's jolliest Jolly Roger.

No. 6: 1. THE SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINGOVE -- Granny the Genie And Magic help Beany and Cecil overcome Dishonest John in his Sinbad suit.
2. CECIL MEETS CECILIA -- Love comes to Cecil in the form of a lovely she serpent.
3. THE CAPTURE OF THUMPERBOLT THE WONDERCOLT -- B.J. and the gang race to catch the world's only flying horse.

No. 7: 1. THE RAT RACE FOR SPACE -- Little Ace returns in another space adventure.
2. BEANY AND THE BOO BIRDS -- Cecil enters a haunted house in which he is pestered by a band of Stay-Ability Boo Birds.
3. BEANY AND CECIL MEET FONG-FONG -- In this satire of King Kong, Fing Fong the Giant Ape is the object of the gangs latest adventure.

No. 8: 1. THE GREATEST SCHNOOK ON EARTH -- Beany and Cecil visit Clowny at the circus and have a run in with the mysterious Schnook.
2. BEANY AND CECIL MEET BILLY THE SQUID -- The good ship Lemin' Lena sails in search of the dreaded Three Headed Threep and meets B.J. and a mechanized monster.
3. THE CAPTURE OF THE DREADED THREE HEADED THREEP -- Beany and Cecil track the Threep to it's cave and discover an anything but normal Normal Norman.

No. 9: 1. BEANY AND THE JACKSTALK -- A satire on Jack and the Beanstalk as Beany and Cecil meet up with the Giant and the Ten Bed.
2. THE HUMONC -- Capt. Buffenpuff arrives on a South Sea Island in search of a rare, humming Humbug.
3. CUTLASS'S LAST STAND -- The gang journeys west and meet Custard and help him fight off an Indian attack which climaxes in a big custard pie throwing contest.

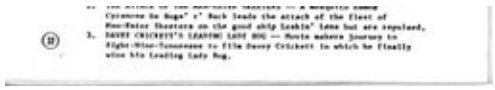
No. 10: 1. HERO BY TRADE -- Cecil is a private eye-ball who is given a treasure map and is sent to find a fortune in gold -- fish.
2. THE ILLEGAL EAGLE FOX -- Uncle Capt., Beany and Cecil scale Eagle Beak Peak to catch a rare bald eagle.
3. CECIL GETS CANINES -- Cecil receives a cute Mexican hairless puppy and has to try and outclaws him from dog catcher B.J.

No. 11: 1. SLEEPING BEAUTY AND THE BEAST -- All your favourite Fairy Tale characters in this spoof with Cecil as Prince Chow-Mein.
2. MOUSE HAT QUACKERS IN BED -- Wm. Shakespeare Wolf tries to do just that to lovable little Graham Quackers, but is foiled.
3. DISHONEST JOHN MEETS CONDOR STARS -- Cecil teams up with Little Beaver and his stuffish pal Twinkle Twinkle to disguise themselves as Cowboy Stars and shoot it out with B.J.

No. 12: 1. BEANY'S BEANY CAP COPTER -- Dishonest John tries to steal Beany's famous Invention the Beany Cap Copter and get it to Washington, D.C. to copyright it before it's rightful claimant.
2. THE UNDERCOVER DONKEY -- An all-cabolic all-ass character named the Donut tries to drink up all the oil in sight till Cecil cures him.
3. THE PHANTOM OF THE HORSE OPERA -- The Phantom, an invisible man riding an invisible horse gives the gang a merry chase.

No. 13: 1. 20,000 LITTLE LEAGUERS UNDER THE SEA -- Lil' Homer a baseball playing octopus plays all positions in a game versus B.J.
2. MALICE IN BLUNDER-LAND -- Uncle hopeful Cecil journeys to Jollymood in this satire on the Film Colony.
3. BUFFALO BILLY -- A little buffalo boy and a frog named Elopalong Catwhill spoils Dishonest John's vacation in the Wild West.

No. 14: 1. THE DIRTY BIRDS -- Uncle Capt.'s attempt to capture and pin making Dirty Birdy exposes him to all kinds of dirty tricks.



3. DAVEY CRICKET'S LEAPING LIGHT BOG -- Movie mokers journey to Fight-Wise-Tennessee to film Davey Cricket in which he finally wins his leading Lady Bug.

No. 15: 1. KEN-TIS-CAR -- A famous mechanical dog causes problems on a movie lot.
2. WILD EAST VASTELAND -- The gang submarine to an underwater western town named Second hand Dodge City where they encounter Marshall Villian and Slopalong Catskill.
3. THE INVISIBLE MAN HAS BUTTER-FINGERS -- The Invisible Man operates a glove puppet which appears to be walking around by itself and causes considerable consternation.

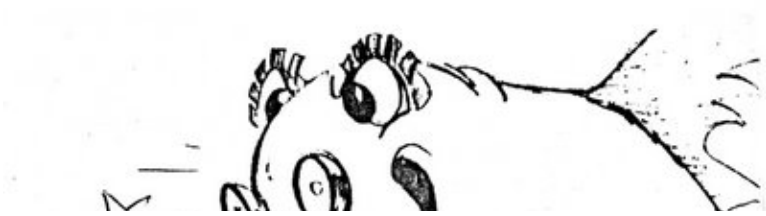
No. 16: 1. HERE COMES THE SHMOE BOAT -- Traveling by Show Boat to below the Mason-Dixon line the gang encounter Dishonest John as a Southern Colonel who gives them no comfort.
2. TAIN'T CRICKET, CRICKETT -- This episode centers around a stockade and there is a battle between Davey Crickett, a bear and Dishonest John.
3. CECIL ALWAYS SAVES THE DAY -- Dishonest John will never learn that crime just doesn't pay, cause Cecil the Sea Stick Sea Serpent always saves the day.

No. 17: 1. AIN'T I A LITTLE STINKER -- Dishonest John reappears in his Billious Beetle get-up and we again have an action filled air battle.
2. THE WARRING 20's -- A satire on the Hollywood gangster movies about the Roaring 20's.
3. BEAST AND CECIL MEET THE INVISIBLE MAN -- Capt. Buffenpuff, Beany and Cecil drive to the haunted mansion of Alfraid Witchcock where we see Terror-Vision complete with commercials for Boris's Baelots.

No. 18: 1. AIN'T THAT A CORK IN THE SNORKEL -- The gang sail on a new adventure on the Leakin' Lena to capture a strange sea creature that blows bubbles out of the top of his head.
2. MAKES A SEA SERPENT SORE -- Capt. Buffenpuff, Beany & Cecil are lead a merry chase by the little double bubble trouble-maker, but they end up good friends.
3. SO WHAT AND THE LYTEN WHATNOTS -- The gang visit Lost Wages for a vacation and becomes involved in a musical satire of the well known Snow White story.

No. 19: 1. CECIL'S COMICAL STRIP -- Cecil swims forth to make his fortune as a comic strip artist but encounters a hard to please editor.
2. BEAST'S REED-JEWELS -- A cat named Peking Tom thinks that Carelless the Mexican Hairless is a mouse and attempts to catch him.
3. MOT THE HECK -- The encounter between Tom and Careless carries over into this action packed chase which climaxes in a satire on a bull fight with the Mexican Hairless victorious.

"Lil' Homer"



No. 20: 1. DRAGON TRAIN -- Driven by Pop Gunn on a trip that spoofs many well known high lights of the old west.
2. TEN FEET TALL AND WET -- Capt. Huffenpuff plans to build a swimming pool for Beany Boy but Dishonest John over-hears.
3. DIRTY POOL -- The making of the swimming pool almost turns out to be a disaster but has a happy ending with all the gang's friends lined up to use the pool.

No. 21: 1. THUMB FUN -- A satire on the shrinking man type movie gives the illusion that there is a Teeny Weeny Beany and Cecil.
2. LIVING DOLL -- Dishonest John's use of a hand puppet Cecil sticking up out of the water confuses everyone for a time but right prevails.
3. BEANYLAND -- The gang rocket to the moon where they build an Amusement Park named Beanyland. Dishonest John tries to spoil the fun.

No. 22: 1. BEANY BLOWS HIS TOP -- Beany's girl friend Baby Ruthy joins him in this adventure.
2. BEANY FLIPS HIS LID -- Beany's Beany Cap Copter helps save the day when it propels it's propeller and brings Cecil to the rescue.
3. THE FLEASTONE KOP KAPER -- Famous canines such as Dog Fairbanks and Wm. S. Redheart are satirized in this parody of early Hollywood film fun.

No. 23: 1. THE MAD ISLE OF MANHATTAN -- Cecil journeys to Mad-Mad-Madison Avenue to sell an idea for a new television show. But Dishonest John steals his idea and ends up hopelessly enmeshed in red tape.
2. THE HONEY AWARDS -- Cecil and D.J. are up for the coveted Honey award. Dishonest John tries to stuff the ballot box but is foiled by Little Price Waiter-Mouse.
3. HARECULES AND THE GOLDEN FLEECING -- Wm. Shakespeare Wolf wants to have Harecules for dinner but is thwarted by the Guided Muscle.

No. 24: 1. CHEESY CHEESY BEAST -- The gang attempt to pass through shark infested waters carrying a boat load of beans to the starving inhabitants of the Hungry I-land.
2. HA HA HA -- That dirty guy Dishonest John resorts to dirty tricks to try to win the Grassy Award, but the Robot Ants carry off the award.
3. THE SINGING SWINGING SEA SERPENT -- The gang search for the World's Largest Diamond in this satire on baseball featuring the Spite-Burp Pirates.

No. 25: 1. THERE GOES A GOOD SQUID -- Dishonest John returns in his mechanical octopus but finds that crime doesn't pay, at least not like it used to.
2. RED HARE -- An original musical in which little Hare-culus is prepared for the great race by his father in this satire on the Tortoise and the Hare.
3. HARE TODAY, GONE TOMORROW -- Speedy Turtle has the race well in hand until Hare-culus unleashes his Guided Muscle.

No. 26: 1. OIL'S WELL THAT END'S WELL -- A sea adventure in which Cecil ends up striking oil.
2. THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A SEA SERPENT -- An original musical following Snorky from the dawn of history to the Loch Ness Monster mystery.
3. D.J. THE D.J. -- Cecil writes a song called "Rag Mop" and tries to record it with comical consequences.

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Bravo! Just too bad for *all* of us that this already-prolific list isn't twice as long.
To provide some balance I have some clips from *Time for Beany* I may just have to *You Tube* here sometime soon. Sure would be great to see a DVD release of all those long-lost shows.

My thanks to this post go out to David Mruz, Mark Kausler, Paul Etcheverry, Sody Clampett, and the Norse God of the funny and ridiculous, Robert "Bob" Clampett!

posted by c. martin croker at 3:14 am | 8 comments

tuesday, november 21, 2006

Happy Monkey Day!

Happy Thanksgiving!

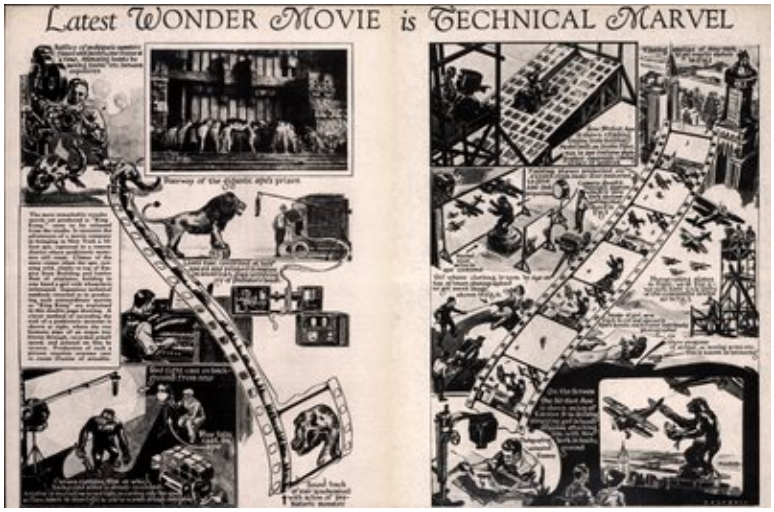
Does this face say Turkey day at your house?

Some of you older readers will remember that Thanksgiving used to --and sometimes *still* doubles as King Kong day! Yep, if you had cable 20-25 years ago you'd know that Thanksgiving was also the "Day of Great Apes" thanks to the programmers at WOR in New York. For a number of years they'd always show the original *King Kong* early on Thanksgiving afternoon, followed by at *least* 2 additional Giant Gorilla movies --and more often that not, It'd be *Son of Kong* then *Mighty Joe Young.* (which was always followed up on Friday by 3 *more* features of Godzilla movies.) And the tradition --albeit in subtle fashion--that holidays have also meant Mammoth Monkeys has continued for some time. Consider that the original King Kong was released at the beginning of the year 1933 and Son of Kong (rushed into production) came out December of that same year...PLUS the last three movies with King Kong in the title (spanning 30 years) were ALL released within 5 days of each other in mid-December. AND- just last year TCM made **sure** Thanksgiving week was throughly-Kong dominated with the long-awaited DVD release of the original 1933 film (in a box set with --you guessed it-- *Son of Kong* and *Mighty Joe Young*) as well as a Holiday airing of the movie and a new Turner production (also on the DVD) of *I'm King Kong: The Merian C. Cooper story*. So who am I to fly in the face of tradition? --in doing my part this year to keep Super-Simians as much a part of the holidays as tensil and those plug-in candles with the screw-in blubs, (plus since I'm still behind on my Halloween postings) here's your Arglebargle quota of Kong for the weekend. Dig in!

King Sized B.S.

One of the more interesting things to me about the promotion of Merian C. Cooper's King Kong was the tapestry of lies the studio endorsed when it came to the how and why of the groundbreaking special effects. Several pieces of production art were prepared, supposedly providing "the real story" of how the effects were accomplished --unfortunately there wasn't a whole lot of truth to them. The story I've heard is that the studio really didn't *want* folks to know how the effects were done so they did this to hopefully steer any rival studios down the wrong path. Which seems *really* odd now, considering Willis O'Brien's stop-motion techniques were not exactly headline news in 1933...He had already stunned the world with pixilated Dinosaurs running around London EIGHT YEARS earlier In the Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* (1925!) (click to enlarge)

This studio explanation ran many years later as a double page spread in *Famous Monsters magazine* early *all* King Kong issue.



It actually made a connection between the non-existant Kong costume, and the that-era, ape-costume actor Charles Gemora. While there was no truth to the fact that Gemora played Kong onscreen, Rumors persisted up to, and even after his death when the papers reported that "Charles Gemora, the man who played *King Kong* has died." I'd love to know the *real* connection is with that story...(click to enlarge)

UPDATE: Hey, ask and ye shall receive, I guess! (It sure didn't take long to get a response...)

Buzz Wrote:

"The Charles Gemora misconception/connection to KONG can be traced to an uncompleted short subject he worked on. The short used marrionettes that were caricatures of Hollywood celebrities. The climax would have been a re-enactment of KING KONG with Gemora holding a Mae West marionette (IIRC). Why the short was never completed, I don't know, but stills from it have appeared in a couple of books on Hollywood films".

...and Jimtex wrote:

"The apesuited Charles Gemora and Mae West marionette pic is in the book "The Making of King Kong" by Orville Goldner and George E. Turner. It was from an abandoned (due to its high cost) three-color Technicolor short entitled "The Lost Island".

Thanks for reminding me Jim, I actually *have* that book (I knew I'd seen

that still somewhere, --I think it was before Bob Burns gave me a course in the various Hollywood Gorilla-men and their esteemed careers-- I just had forgotten it was the Gemora suit in this shot!)
Here's that very-rare still from that very-rare book. Enjoy!

Kong Cards & Comics etc.

One of the harder card sets to get nowadays is the 1960's set of the original Kong movie. Here's six cards from that set that sold on eBay a couple of years back (...for a fairly hefty price as I recall).

Here's yet another blast from the past...

VOLUME 1, NO 7
WORLD'S FIRST NEWSPAPER OF HORROR, SCI-FI AND FANTASY!
the Monster Time
BAT MAN
50¢
FOR PRESIDENT! P8
GIANT COLOR POSTER INSIDE
GODZILLA! KING OF THE MONSTERS! PAGE 3
KING KONG KOMIX P.20
KING KONG MEETS THE GIANT BUG! P.10
ON SALE EVERY 2 WEEKS

This little Kong ditty ran in a the seventh issue of the 1970's newspaper-mag *The Monster Times*...which ironically had a Godzilla cover (above) To my knowledge it's never been reprinted outside of that forum, so enjoy! (and, as always click to enlarge)

While we're on the subject of TMT, Gray Morrow provided this outstanding version of the King of Skull Island for the very first issue of that little mag back when it premiered in 1971.

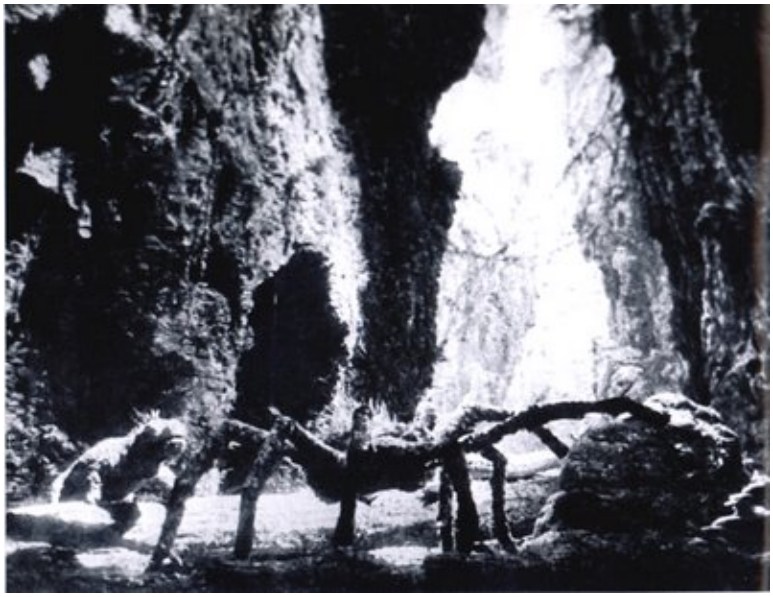
VOLUME 1 NO.1
THE WORLD'S FIRST NEWSPAPER OF HORROR, SCI-FI AND FANTASY!
the Monster Times
THIS MAN IS A FAKE! READ WHY. P.6
50¢
THE MEN WHO SAVED KONG! P.1
MUSHROOM MONSTERS! P.18
THE END OF THE WORLD! P.22
BONUS! Monster-Sized Color Poster Inside!
ON SALE EVERY 2 WEEKS

Rounding out this section with this great foreign Kong poster that looks almost as much like super-cool model box art.

And speaking of offbeat...check out this publicity still that has Kong squaring off against the same Stegosaur that gave Carl Denham and co. troubles early in their adventures on Skull Island (In the film they never actually met).

which brings us to...

...That Elusive Spider Scene.



Here's the biggest, nicest still I could find from the "lost spider pit sequence" from the original *King Kong*. Consider it a concellation prize for any spider-scene promises you might've received by anyone else in the last year. Hoo-Boy.

Okay, I'll explain...

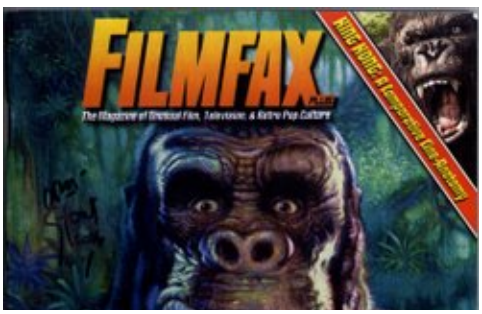
William Stout and I got into an interesting conversation at his table at San Diego Con in 2005. I told him I was working on a King Kong rarities DVD and we started talking about the lost Kong Spider scene. He suddenly got kind of seroius and leaning forward said "Hey, ya know what we oughta do...we oughta do a fake one. Y'know...the entire sequence!"

Fake the whole scene? I laughed. Sure! That'd be great...I'm totally onboard.

We loosely talked about what would be needed to do tackle such a herculean task. It was mostly just wishin', but it was fun to speculate on the possibilities. (Besides, if he was at *all* serious I definitely wanted in!

Little did we suspect that half a world away in New Zealand that very thing was happening for real at Peter Jackson's King Kong special effects unit. *Their* version of the lost Spider scene was being prepared as an extra for the springtime release of Jackson's Kong to DVD. I was pre-sold on the disk based based on that nugget alone...since it was one I had given semi-serious consideration to myself. I bought the disk the day it came out and watched the extras --including their Spider scene-- right away, before I even looked at the movie again.

When I saw Bill Stout again at this past summer's Comicon it wasn't long before our talk came around to Jackson's Kong DVD.



So, how 'bout that Spider sequence? I pointedly asked.

He rolled his eyes and shook his head.

What a shame. "With the

same money and materials we could've really kicked some ass!"

"We at least would've hired look-alike actors to double for the 1930s actors they were supposed to be replacing ...Sheez!"

We had pretty much the same opinion that the live "actors" in the sequence didn't look like like the seafarin' type --they looked like *animators* (which they were)...all white and doughy. (They didn't act much like actors either if you ask me...)

Plus --as was the case with almost every scene that was shot green screen for The Jackson Kong, every actor was *rim-lit*.

Rim-Lit??? You SHOW me a scene in 1933 Kong where a crowd shot is rimlit! The lighting between the new fleeing Venture crew scenes and the original Kong sailor footage don't even come close to matching. So many aspects of this production are nearly-maniacal in their meticulousness (the recreation and construction of period models, using original time period equipment, replication of technique, etc., etc...)that it's almost unfathomable to me how both showy AND slip-shod the overall un-Merian C. Cooper-esque parts of the newly-finished sequence feel.

They had *all* the resources. They had previously unimaginable --almost magical-- holy-grail-type reference materials as well as half the money in the world to make sure the match of new footage to the original 1933 film was seamless as Klaatu's saucer.

Why? *How* could this have turned out so disappointingly? I can't tell you how let down I was by the final product. It was like having a can't-lose date with a porn-star supermodel, who during the course of the date tells you she's becoming a nun and is now celibate.

For me it really came down to this...When I hear "Spider scene from King Kong" I would naturally expect to see the ABOVE SCENE in motion.

WHERE THE HELL WAS *THIS* SCENE?? Where was *THIS* SPIDER?

I didn't even need an entire bogus sequence, just **that** scene in motion woulda done it for me!

All that **I** wanted was to see what proceeded and followed this frozen film frame I'd first laid eyes on in *Famous Monsters* magazine when I was twelve.

Instead we get some scuttling, fast-moving, big-assed, Tim Burton inspired-looking beastie, and a bunch of other un-Obie looking (in my opinion) 21st century critters. Thanks loads.

But okay, It's Thanksgiving...I'm off the soapbox (I've just been needin' to blow off some steam about *that* whole deal for awhile now).

Big thanks for this post go out to Merian C. Cooper, Willis O'Brien, Gray Morrow, Steve Hickman and John Simons, The Monster Times, Time Warner, Forrest J. Ackerman and William Stout ...I couldn'ta done it without ya.

I do have more animation and art-related posts coming up soon so you art-fans hang in there.

'Til then...Happy Holidays!

posted by c. martin croker at 5:56 am | 7 comments

thursday, november 09, 2006

The Shape of Shat

The first time I saw *Halloween* (back when it was originally released --and with my girlfriend in a jam-packed theatre on a friday night) I instinctively knew I had seen the mask worn by teen-killer Michael Myers somewhere before, but I couldn't quite put my finger on it.
Later, when I found out it was a repainted William (Captain Kirk) Shatner mask I was like, "Pfft, of course."
Reportedly filmmaker John Carpenter originally envisioned Michael Myers to be walking around conducting business wearing a Frankenstein mask, but somebody on the *Halloween* staff had the idea to make the face more of a "blank slate" face that showed no emotion. The mask that was chosen for "The Shape" (as he appeared in the credits) was a current (1976) Don Post full-head William "Captain Kirk" Shatner. The Shat-mask then had its' eye-holes widened, face sprayed white, hair dyed darker and its' sideburns ripped off. (according to *HorrorHound magazine* these modifications were provided by longtime Don Post employee Bill Malone) Yeah, here's your amoral immortal killer --"Cold Willie T". A couple of Halloweens later (holidays, not movies) I looked around at several different sculpts of Shatner masks --in hopes of custom making my own costume-- but they never looked quite right for one reason or another. I didn't know at the time that I was really looking for the old Don Post mask, which was scarce by then.
If you've been a reader of this blog for long, you know how I love providing the ol' "previously unseen side-by side comparisons". So. Here's a shot of the original Shatner mask used for the Michael Myer conversion along with some Michael shots from the original *Halloween* movie.

Really though --which guy would be ultimately be creepier if he had you cornered in a bedroom closet with a butcher knife?

Y'know...I'm just sayin'....

posted by c. martin croker at 7:08 pm | 1 comments